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Problems of physical accessibility of components of a tourism product for persons with disabilities

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ABSTRACT

The study was carried out in order to determine the compliance of the infrastructure of the tourist product of the Republic of Dagestan with the requirements of a barrier-free environment. The availability of accommodation facilities, social and cultural facilities, beaches has been investigated. The prospects for the development of research in this area in the future are determined.

Keywords: wheelchair tourism, physical accessibility, tourist product, barrier-free environment, accommodation facilities, social and cultural facilities, beaches

INTRODUCTION

The relevance of research on the accessibility of tourist infrastructure facilities for persons with disabilities is due to the growth of the tourism sector adapted for persons with disabilities in the total volume of the tourist market in the regions. The physical accessibility of vehicles, hotel enterprises, catering facilities, attractive and recreational components of a regional tourist product is becoming an important factor in ensuring competitiveness. The barrier-free environment makes it possible to increase the volume of sales of services by expanding the attraction of people with disabilities and their accompanying persons, to increase customer loyalty, and to partially neutralize the seasonality factor.

REFERENCES REVIEW

The consumer choice of a tourist with disabilities is associated not only with the desire to get new impressions, rest and recover, but also with the need to take into account the availability of each component of the tourist package (Dąbrowska, 2013).

Concentration of efforts to ensure the availability of transport, accommodation, food, recreational and entertainment tourism services will provide a significant influx of additional clients, not only disabled people, but also accompanying persons (Sanmargaraja & Wee, 2018).

Barriers to the consumption of tourism services are related to the nature and severity of the disability (Carmen & Andreea & Viorel, 2011).

Insufficient statistical base of research in the field of barrier-free tourism does not allow for a structured assessment of the needs of consumers with disabilities (Souca, 2010).

Developers of tourist products in large tourist destinations should give particular importance to the formation of a barrier-free tourist environment (Elinç & Elinç & Akinci, 2012).

The experience of the leading tourist regions of the world demonstrates the need to include persons with special needs in decision-making mechanisms and the formation of long-term policy by government agencies, public organizations and the business community (Akinci, 2015).

METHODS

The study, carried out in January-February 2021, covered the tourist sites of the Republic of Dagestan, including hotel enterprises and catering facilities, as the basic components of a tourist package, museums as components of cultural tourism, as well as beaches as components of water tourism. In the course of the study, the accessibility,

comfort and informational content and safety of the listed objects for the following categories of tourists were assessed:

- disabled people using wheelchairs;
- people using additional support when moving;
- totally blind;
- visually impaired with residual vision;
- totally deaf;
- hearing impaired;
- people with disabilities with cognitive disabilities;
- other people with limited mobility.

In the process of visiting these objects, questionnaires were filled out, compiled on the basis of the methodology for analyzing the barrier-free facilities of objects (Zaitseva, Shuravina, 2016). The visit was carried out on a general basis, so the assessment of individual components was not always possible. The choice of this method of collecting information is justified by the need to exclude the subjective opinion of stakeholders when questioning. The study also used data published by the Ministry of Tourism and Folk Arts and Crafts of the Republic of Dagestan.

The issues of accessibility of transport as an element of a tourist package were not considered within the framework of this study.

Affordable tourism as a central part of a responsible tourism policy in the region

The World Health Organization estimates that 15% of the world's population (1 billion people) live with some form of disability. The World Tourism Organization is convinced that the accessibility of all tourism facilities, products and services should be a central part of any responsible and sustainable tourism policy. "The WTO Guidelines for Accessible Tourism for All" notes that persons with disabilities are increasingly involved in tourism activities due to the growing level of their economic and social integration. However, there are still a lot of barriers of all kinds that prevent people with disabilities from accessing tourism services. Accessibility is not a requirement only for persons with disabilities. Tourist areas that meet the requirements of a barrier-free environment, thereby increase the quality of life of the indigenous people of the region.

In the "Strategy for the development of tourism in the Russian Federation

for the period up to 2035" it is indicated that the implementation of measures to create and develop infrastructure for tourists with disabilities, ensure the availability of tourist facilities for this category of tourists, develop a barrier-free environment, improve the navigation and orientation system in the field of tourism and information services for people with disabilities contribute to the formation of tourist product for tourists with disabilities.

The legal framework for accessible tourism in the Russian Federation is multifaceted and allows you to cover all the elements of the formation of tourism infrastructure for persons with disabilities. It includes documents such as:

1. Codes of the Russian Federation: urban planning, tax, civil, labor, administrative offenses;
2. Federal laws: "On social protection of disabled people in the Russian Federation", "On the basics of tourist activities in the Russian Federation", "On the protection of consumer rights";
3. Codes of rules: "Accessibility of buildings and structures for people with limited mobility", "Buildings and structures. General provisions of design, taking into account accessibility for people with limited mobility";
4. State standards: "Tourist services. Tourism services for people with disabilities", "Tourist services. Requirements for ensuring the safety of tourists", "Services to the population. Terms and definitions" and others;
5. Other regulations.

However, the knowledge and understanding by representatives of the business community of the legal framework in the field of barrier-free access to tourist infrastructure facilities has not yet reached the proper level. Because of this, a situation arises of a shortage of a tourist product adapted for persons with disabilities. I ignore the opportunities provided by barrier-free tourism today, the modern tourist business risks missing out on the opportunity for sustainable and responsible development in the future.

According to the Comprehensive Survey of Living Conditions of the Population, conducted by the Federal State Statistics Service in 2018, 8% of the population in the Russian Federation is disabled. 28,7% of them take part in tourist trips.

Internal and inbound tourist flow to the Republic of Dagestan in 2020 amounted to 840 thousand people according to the Ministry of Tourism and Folk Arts and Crafts. The potential segment of tourists with disabilities may include up to 20 thousand people in year.

Accommodation availability

The hotel sector of the Republic of Dagestan as of 02/01/2021 includes 130 hotels with 2661 rooms (on average 20,46 rooms per 1 hotel). For 66 hotels, it was not possible to obtain data confirming the equipment of public premises or rooms for the reception of guests with disabilities. Table 1 shows data on the availability of accommodation facilities.

Table 1: Availability of accommodation facilities in the Republic of Dagestan

| Number of hotels | Abs., Units | Rel., % |
|---|-------------|---------|
| Total | 130 | 100 |
| There are no accessibility conditions | 66 | 50,76 |
| Meet specific requirements for accessibility of the environment | 64 | 49,24 |
| Transport accessibility and parking | 44 | 33,84 |
| Accessible entrance group | 38 | 29,23 |
| An accessible environment is formed in public spaces | 30 | 23,07 |
| The accessible environment is formed in individual rooms | 26 | 20,0 |
| Fully wheelchair accessible | 8 | 6,15 |

Thus, only 6,15% of hotels (approximately 126 rooms) are fully prepared to accommodate guests with disabilities. However, such a number of rooms, under certain conditions, can block the potential tourist flow of this segment. An important direction in the development of the accessibility of the hotel sector in the Republic of Dagestan is the improvement of the material and technical base and equipment of the room stock, as well as public premises of hotel enterprises.

Availability of social and cultural sites

The study included 12 social and cultural facilities, including 5 theaters, 6 museums, 1 library. Table 2 shows data on the compliance of these objects with the requirements of the available environment.

Table 2: Availability of social and cultural facilities in the Republic of Dagestan

| Number of social and cultural sites | Abs., Units | Rel., % |
|---|-------------|---------|
| Total | 12 | 100 |
| Transport accessibility and parking | 12 | 100 |
| Accessible entrance group | 12 | 100 |
| Available routes | 10 | 83,33 |
| Accessibility of public spaces | 9 | 0,75 |
| Accessibility of auditoriums, expositions | 7 | 58,33 |

The primary directions of the formation of a barrier-free environment at social and cultural facilities of the Republic of Dagestan is the equipment of spectator seats, auditoriums of theaters and museum expositions.

Accessibility of beaches

The length of the coastline of the Caspian Sea in the Republic of Dagestan is 530 kilometers, therefore beach tourism is an important seasonal component of the regional tourism product. 22 properties are included in the beach register. In 2019, the first beach for people with diseases of the musculoskeletal system, using a wheelchair, was opened, which fully meets the requirements for organizing a barrier-free environment. Information on the availability of beaches is given in the table 3.

Table 3: Accessibility of the beaches of the Republic of Dagestan

| Number of social and cultural sites | Abs., Units | Rel., % |
|---|-------------|---------|
| Total | 22 | 100 |
| Transport accessibility and parking | 7 | 31,81 |
| Available routes | 4 | 18,18 |
| Accessibility of changing rooms, showers, toilets | 2 | 9,09 |
| Fully wheelchair accessible | 1 | 4,54 |

As the data presented above show, it is the accessibility of the beaches that is the weakest point in the tourist and recreational infrastructure of the Republic of Dagestan.

CONCLUSION

We have planned further development of research in this direction. The next stages of the study will be to assess the availability of transport services, catering establishments and the quality of service for people with disabilities at various facilities in the tourism and recreation sector.

Interpretation of the data obtained as a result of the study makes it possible to characterize the tourist market of the Republic of Dagestan as unprepared to serve certain categories of tourists, including those with limited mobility and other health limitations. The serious backlog of the material and technical base from the requirements of barrier-freeness must be compensated for by additional costs for modernization, as well as by compulsory compliance with the requirements for accessibility in the design and commissioning of new objects of the tourist and recreational complex.

Formation and development of recreational tourism for people with disabilities is a mandatory component of "responsible" tourism.

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